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ABSTRACT

Educators cite classroom management as intrinsic to the learning process. This paper presents a broad picture of classroom management and offers some suggestions for actual classroom implementation. Major findings are highlighted, along with practical techniques for their instructional application. Classroom management is an organizational process dependent on many variables--the teacher's philosophy of education, grade level, student needs, available instructional resources, and administrative support. Effective teaching research indicates that good classroom managers are good teachers who create optimal learning experiences for students, thus decreasing the likelihood of management problems. These teachers set high learning standards, hold students accountable for their own learning, communicate expectations, provide prompt feedback, utilize class time for academic learning, and are well prepared. Organized classroom activity occurs when behavior standards are practiced, reviewed, and enforced, not merely written or discussed. Disciplinary measures, when needed, are carried out swiftly, fairly, and consistently. Perhaps the most important component of classroom management is creating a positive classroom environment that praises appropriate behavior and academic achievement and emphasizes positive interactions. (MLH)

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# Classroom Management: Theory Into Practice

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Abstract

Educators cite classroom management as intrinsic to the learning process. Good classroom managers are good classroom teachers. Classroom management is an organizational process. This process includes instructional strategies, behavioral techniques and classroom physical structures. Current research on teacher effectiveness and its effects on classroom management are related to the management process. While the theoretical foundations of classroom management are discussed, the practical application of such theory is emphasized.

Organizing and managing the classroom are major concerns of teachers, administrators and parents. When an instructional leader is an effective instructional manager, the learning process for students rapidly becomes efficient. The purpose of this discussion is to present a broad picture of classroom management and to offer some helpful suggestions for actual classroom implementation. Within this discussion, major research findings related to teacher effectiveness will be highlighted as well as practical techniques for their instructional application.

Classroom management is defined as a complex set of plans and actions which the teacher uses to ensure that the learning in the classroom is both effective and efficient (Jacobson et al, 1985, p. 235). Within the literature, the terms classroom management and behavior management are often used interchangeably. However, these terms are not the same. Classroom management actually encompasses behavioral strategies as an integral component of the overall classroom management system. As Jacobson and his colleagues (1985) have stated, the competent classroom manager permits students to manage their own behavior by creating a learning environment in which students practice acceptable behavioral controls (p. 233).

The development of a management system depends upon many variables. The teacher's own philosophy of education will have a significant impact upon instructional goals and

strategies, curricular decisions, and interpersonal relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents. Management systems will vary according to grade level or, in the case of special education, the categorical placement of students with special needs. Teachers will also discover that the availability of instructional materials and resources will affect organizational policies. Finally, administrative support may influence classroom and/or disciplinary procedures.

The research on effective teaching leads us to conclude that effective teachers are also effective classroom managers. Teachers identified as "effective" create optimum learning experiences for students, thus decreasing the likelihood of management problems. From a review of the literature on teacher effectiveness, researchers from the Northwest Regional Research Laboratory (1985) have enumerated twelve characteristics of effective educators. Each of these characteristics relates to effective classroom management.

Effective teachers/managers follow a pre-planned curriculum developing goals and instructional objectives which correspond to the learning styles and abilities of individual students. In addition, effective instructors help students prepare to learn. The stage is set for each learning experience. Relationships between concepts are drawn, and students are given reasons for learning specific skills and facts.

Effective teachers set high standards for student learning. They expect the best possible performance. Furthermore, students are held accountable for their own learning. Students are required to develop a sense of shared responsibility for correctly completed tasks.

Efficient teachers also communicate clearly to students. This is easily accomplished when teachers ask questions and move around the room to check student understanding. Further, effective teachers provide prompt feedback allowing students to correct errors immediately. If students do not understand concepts, they are retaught. This maximizes opportunities for student success.

Effective teachers utilize class time for academic learning. Students have less opportunity to misbehave because they are actively engaged in learning. Specific times are allocated for "housekeeping chores" such as collecting lunch money, preparing absence lists, and so forth. Mundane tasks are not permitted to interfere with instructional time. Classroom efficiency is further enhanced by teachers who are ready for each class period to begin. Lesson plans are organized; materials are ready and close at hand. In addition, students know how to move about the classroom. When one activity is completed, students are prepared to move smoothly into the next.

Organized classroom activity can occur when strict standards for behavior are not just written or discussed,

but are also practiced, reviewed and enforced. Disciplinary measures, when needed, are carried out swiftly, fairly and consistently.

Finally, a positive classroom climate characterizes an efficiently managed learning environment. Teacher-student interactions are positive. Students are respected as individuals and rewarded for their accomplishments.

How can educators develop effective teaching characteristics which will strengthen their classroom management expertise? To become effective managers, teachers must formally establish what it is they plan to accomplish and how. They must be consistent with organizational and behavioral policies.

Educators must be willing and able to follow through with pre-established consequences for incomplete tasks or inappropriate actions. Instructional activities must be designed according to individual student needs as well as student management capabilities. To become effective managers, teachers must focus upon prevention. Potential problems must be anticipated or "nipped in the bud." Finally, effective management calls for maintaining an instructional momentum with well planned lessons and a rapid instructional pace.

Many of the organizational difficulties which teachers encounter are those which they have created themselves. For change to occur, teachers must be willing to examine their

present classroom situation. Routines for non-instructional activities should be established. Classroom rules should be concisely and positively stated. Consequences should be clearly defined and consistently applied. Teachers should decide how these issues will be handled prior to the beginning of school. On the first day of school, these routines should be explained to the class.

Perhaps the most important component of effective classroom management is creating a positive classroom environment. Teachers need to praise both appropriate behavior and academic achievement. Interactions should be positive rather than negative. The focus should be upon rewarding academic achievement. This is the ultimate goal of effective classroom management.

## References

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